

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Patrick Boyd Co-Chair
The Honorable Herron Gaston, Co-Chair
The Honorable Paul Cicarella,
The Honorable Greg Howard,
Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3600
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Raised Bill 972: An Act Concerning Crisis Intervention Training For Police Officers And
Collaboration Between Police And Social Workers

The Social Work and Law Enforcement (SWLE) Project firmly supports Raised Bill S.B 972: An Act Concerning Crisis Intervention Training for Police Officers And Collaboration Between Police And Social Workers. The SWLE Project is dedicated to advancing the ethical and effective integration of social work services into law enforcement agencies by preparing social workers and social work students to assume roles in the emerging field of police social work in Connecticut. The SWLE Project has been training police officers and social workers to work side-by-side since the fall of 2020, after the passing of the Police Accountability Bill. As the first in the country to develop a Police Social Work Academy and the only collaborative in Connecticut to specialize in training specifically for police officers and social workers to work together in an operational capacity to serve our communities as effective, essential, and equal partners, we have had the opportunity to not only serve as trainers but provide consultation to both social workers and law enforcement officers seeking support in this area in and outside of Connecticut. From our experience, we have seen the need for more crisis intervention training and for social workers and law enforcement officers to learn how to work together.

The emergent field of police social work in Connecticut has been welcomed by officers and social workers alike, who realize the value that it brings to the citizens of communities across the state and partnering qualified and well -trained Police Social Workers (PSWs) within Police Departments creates a valuable, accessible resource for citizens who need a mental health response instead of a law enforcement response. The position of the SWLE Project is that Raised Bill 972 is imperative for police and social work partnerships to effectively deliver services to communities in a way that reduces recidivism rates and bridges communities.

Raised Bill S.B. 972 will create a process for meaningful, data-driven dialogue that will sustain both sides of the police and social work partnership and foster meaningful discussions on how these collaborations can continue to serve our communities best. As a multi-disciplinary working group of scholars, social workers, and police officers, the SWLE Project has been leaning forward in this emerging space since 2020. We anticipate the positive impact that Raised Bill S.B 972 can have in this area. Thank you for your respectful consideration of this testimony.

The SWLE Project:

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